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ABSTRACT

In 1991, a national study was conducted to identify the characteristics of adult women attending two-year colleges and determine how these characteristics influenced the students' educational experience. Data for the study were drawn from a cross-sectional survey of 7,558 students in 95 colleges, 58% of whom were women, and from two group interviews. The student characteristics examined included age, high school grade point average, age of children living in the home of the student, and ethnicity. The students' community college experience was defined in terms of barriers that prevented students from taking a full college load, pressures experienced while attending college, level of participation in student services, benefits associated with attending college, and choice of major. Study findings included the following: (1) 26% of the women in the survey came from ethnic minority groups; (2) 40% cited finding time to study, and work schedules as barriers to taking a full college load; (3) one-third of the Asian women and 30% of the Hispanic women indicated that inadequate finances kept them from taking a full college load; (4) women 19 years of age and younger experienced more academic pressures than older age cohorts, with Hispanic women scoring highest on mean measures of academic pressures of all ethnic groups; (5) students 36 years of age and older reported more positive benefits than younger students; and (6) Asian and Caucasian women had the lowest participation rates in student services of all groups. The study report includes an extensive literature review, recommendations, and survey instruments. (JMC)

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